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MONDAY, MAY 23, 1859.

REV. SAMUEL HAUGHTON, A. M., F. R. S., &c., in the Chair.

W. R. WILDE, Esq., read the continuation of his paper "On the unmanufactured Animal Remains in the collection of the Academy."

MONDAY, JUNE 13, 1859.

JAMES HENTHORN TODD, D. D., President, in the Chair.

With the leave of the Academy, Mr. E. CLIBBORN read the first part of his paper—

ON THE USE OF THE DISTAFF AND SPINDLE CONSIDERED AS THE INSIGNIA
OF UNMARRIED WOMEN.

THE object of the author was to explain how far the use of the distaff and spindle could be considered applicable in literature and art, as insignia of women, in different countries, and at different times.

In contra-distinction to a paper published in the "Archæologia," vol. xxxvii., by J. R. Akerman, Esq., it was contended that, as unmarried women, in the middle ages, were considered *spinsters*, and as married women, or wives, were considered *weavers*, the application of the implements used by spinners might with propriety be assigned as insignia to the unmarried, but not to the married, whose proper insignia should connect them with the loom or its productions, rather than with spinning.

It was explained, that the usage by Shakspeare of the words "distaff," "distaff-women," and "spinster," clearly implied a different, and indeed an opposite meaning, as insignia, for the distaff and spindle; and also proved, that, in the instances where married women claimed to use, or intended to use the distaff, they tacitly declared their intention of repudiating their marriage vows. They thus indirectly proclaimed themselves free from the control of their husbands, and so, were practically acting as unmarried women; the distaff was, consequently, a fitting but exceptional insignia for them. Instances from Shakspeare were given, to show that the general notion of rebellion, public as well as private, on the part of women, was indicated by the distaff, apparently in contra-distinction to the spindle; and Shakspeare, in so using the distaff, had the warrant of antiquity, the Fates appearing to be almost always armed with distaffs; and other goddesses, like Minerva, hold the distaff as the emblem of dominion, rule, or power, but not of marital obedience, and domestic subjection, indicated by the spindle, which, as an insignia of the unmarried woman, had almost opposite meanings to the distaff, also considered as an emblem of condition.

It was suggested that the same rules of language which gave us the terms *spinster* and *distaff-woman* for single females, derived from the spindle and distaff, should also supply another name for women, considered unmarried, from the ancient name in English of the verticillum, or

"wharrow," used to give momentum to the spindle, and maintain its rotation after the act of twisting, and casting it from the hand of the spinster. In this act the verticillum was often lost, dropped, and, not thought worth the trouble of picking up, it was often cast away as worthless.

After a long search, it was at last found that the heraldic description of the coat of arms of the family of Trefuss, in "Guillim's Display of Heraldry," p. 300, supplied the obsolete English name given above of the verticillum, and thus completed a series of titles for unmarried females, proving that the three instruments used by the spinsters of antiquity and of the middle ages had suggested English words; as if the several implements, the spindle, the distaff, and the wharrow, had been considered insignia of those denominations of women who were, or who claimed to be, unmarried, or who acted as if they were unmarried; consequently, it was inferred that the three instruments used by spinners formerly might be considered as proper insignia of unmarried women, or married women in marital rebellion, but not of married women properly so called, who, as *wives*, were considered by the analogy of language to be *weavers*, and who continued to act up to those vows of obedience to the laws of the land and morality to which they promised to conform for life when they were married.

It was explained that the cases quoted in Mr. Akerman's paper, in which it was inferred that the spindle and distaff, taken together, were the insignia of wives, or weavers, as well as of *spinsters*, or spinners, when properly investigated, led to a different conclusion, and that the proper insignia of the woman considered to be a *wife* should always imply the loom or its productions, a warp or woven fabric, and not a mere thread or yarn, or any instrument used for spinning it.

BINDON B. STONEY, C. E., M. R. I. A., read a paper—

ON THE APPLICATION OF SOME NEW FORMULÆ TO THE CALCULATION OF
STRAINS IN BRACED GIRDERS.

UNTIL within the last ten years our knowledge respecting the strains in the vertical portion or web of flanged girders has been very limited, and crude and imperfect views still prevail respecting the duty which this portion of a girder has to perform. Various, indeed, have been the opinions of so-called practical men on the subject. Some say the web keeps the flanges apart; others conceive that it holds them together; but comparatively few have perceived that its essential duty is to transmit the vertical pressure of the load to the abutments, producing in so doing horizontal strains in the flanges, or, if they have acknowledged this to be its proper function, they have failed to follow out their reasoning to its legitimate result, viz., that the web sustains strains which are essentially characterized by the oblique direction in which they act, and which can be practically determined both in direction and amount, enabling the engineer to dispose of the material in the most economical manner, so that its full capabilities of sustaining strain may be called into play.